

IMPACTS OF ALTERNATIVE D

VISITOR EXPERIENCE/ INTERPRETATION/EDUCATION

The Delta Heritage Information Network would focus attention both regionally and nationally on the significance and magnitude of the lower Mississippi Delta region's diverse resources and the interrelationships between the region's history and its resources, from prehistory to the present. The information network could provoke interest in and stimulate visitation to the lower Mississippi Delta region, but many may be content with only the information gleaned from the various media. By not experiencing the region's resources firsthand, the "virtual" visitor would, for example, miss the pleasure of coming upon historic resources that poignantly reveal, by engaging all of our senses, the events of the past and provide a glimpse into the lives and aspirations of those who lived before us.

Enhancing the residents' awareness of their cultural and natural heritages would increase their pride in and appreciation of the region's significant cultural, natural, and scenic resources. Increased appreciation for these resources could contribute to their long-term preservation.

RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP

Cultural and Natural Resources

The responsibility for preserving the lower Delta region's cultural and natural resources would lie with local governments, organizations, and citizens. There would be no measures initiated as a result of the implementation of this alternative to help protect or restore natural or scenic resources on either private or public land. Preservation efforts would continue to be fragmented and uncoordinated, due to limited technical assistance and inadequate funding. However, the burgeoning information about the region's varied cultural and natural resources that would be available through the Delta Heritage Network could result not

only in increased visitation but also increased public awareness and appreciation of the resources, resulting in the encouragement of preservation efforts and possibly additional revenue for resource preservation. As is the case with the other alternatives, higher levels of visitation could eventually contribute to the degradation of cultural and natural resources, which would necessitate increased management of the visitor experience. The potential risk, however, is far outweighed by the potential benefits of preserving neglected and deteriorating resources.

FACILITY DEVELOPMENT

Implementation of this alternative would not result in the development of new facilities.

MANAGEMENT APPROACH

Unlike the management approaches described in the previous alternatives, there would be neither a formalized framework for bringing together existing public and private initiatives nor a mechanism for creating new ones as needed. The existing Lower Mississippi Delta Development Center, which would manage the Delta Heritage Information Network, would lack both the resources and funding to be more than an advocate for regional heritage tourism and resource preservation. Such advocacy, however, could ignite grassroots support for heritage tourism and resource preservation throughout the lower Delta region, providing momentum for the successful development and initiation of the proposed 10-year strategic plan, which would both address attracting the support and participation of all levels of government, businesses, organizations and institutions, and private citizens and the means of acquiring the necessary capital to implement proposed heritage tourism initiatives.